

separate Veteran's Corps designed to help veterans meet the needs of their fellow servicemen and women; such as providing programs that help provide education, mentoring, and job training to fellow veterans.

More than 4,400 seniors in Rhode Island contribute their time and talents in one of three Senior Corps programs which will be expanded within the Serve America Act. Foster Grandparents in Rhode Island serve more than 3,200 young people who have special needs. I am pleased that this bill authorizes \$115 million to encourage these efforts not only in my state of Rhode Island, but nationwide. In addition, The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act will allow seniors to earn a \$1,000 education award for 350 hours of service, that may be passed on to their children, foster child or grandchildren.

I am pleased that this bill provides new incentives for middle and high school students to volunteer in their communities, and will allow them to earn up to \$1,000 in education awards to be used for college. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act will also establish Youth Engagement Zones, a service-learning program to engage low-income high school students and out-of-school youth in volunteer efforts.

In my home state of Rhode Island, programs like YouthBuild Providence will benefit from this important legislation through funding for the recruitment, training and professional development of coordinators for the program. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act will also increase the number of AmeriCorps volunteers and increase the education reward to \$5,350 for 2010, to match the maximum Pell Grant scholarship award.

Currently, more than 14,000 people of all ages and backgrounds are helping to meet local needs, strengthen communities, and increase civic engagement through 53 national service projects across Rhode Island. This year, the Corporation for National and Community Service will commit more than \$7,300,000 to support Rhode Island communities through national service initiatives.

The benefits that this legislation would bring to our struggling communities, across this country, and in my home state of Rhode Island, are endless.

Like its namesake, this bill dedicates itself toward the promotion of solidarity, selflessness and courage. I will be proud to vote in favor of this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

HONORING THE VOLUNTEER EFFORTS OF CHEYNE VALENTINE AND PAMELA FAWNS WITH THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD

HON. DENNY REHBERG

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. REHBERG. Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate and honor two young students from my district who have achieved national recognition for exemplary volunteer service in their communities. Cheyne Valentine of Bigfork, Montana and Pamela Fawns of Corvallis, Montana, have been named as Montana's top youth volunteers by The 2009 Pru-

dential Spirit of Community Awards program. This is an annual honor conferred on the most impressive student volunteers in each state and the District of Columbia.

Mr. Valentine was nominated by the American Red Cross of Montana in Great Falls, and Pamela was nominated by the Ravalli County 4-H in Hamilton. As State Honorees, each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion and an all-expenses-paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where they will join honorees from each of the other states and District of Columbia for several days of national recognition events. Ten of them will be named America's top youth volunteers for 2009 at that time.

As a member of the American Red Cross of Montana and a senior at Bigfork High School, Cheyne helped spearhead a community campaign that collected \$4,400 to purchase two heart defibrillators for his school and provide CPR training for coaches, after his best friend suffered a heart attack during football practice and later died. When his friend, Jeff, collapsed on the field, Cheyne discovered that school personnel had neither the training nor equipment to deal with such an emergency. "I am certain that if the coach had been trained in CPR and there had been a defibrillator on the field, the outcome for my friend would have been different," he said. Cheyne began seeking donations to pay for two automatic external defibrillators and training for his school's coaches. He and his mother posted 500 fliers, spoke to hundreds of community members and wrote columns and letters to editors of local newspapers. The defibrillators purchased with the donations from the fundraising drive were presented to Bigfork High School in December, 2008. Meanwhile, Cheyne also has begun working to persuade state legislators to pass a law requiring AEDs at all school athletic events and training for all coaches in Montana. "I have started the ball rolling in this community," said Cheyne, "and it will continue until all schools in Montana make these safety changes."

Ms. Fawns, a member of the Ravalli County 4-H and a seventh grader at Valley Oak Academy High School in Corvallis, creates floral arrangements to promote and raise funds for 4-H and other school projects. "I have always had a joy in creating art with flowers because flower arrangements lighten up your mood and can make people feel happy when they are ill or sad," said Pamela, who comes from a long line of horticulturists. To gain more experience in floral design, Pamela persuaded a local florist to let her work as a volunteer intern. After learning first-hand about selecting, processing and arranging flowers, she started to think about ways she could use her skills to raise money for community projects. Through flower sales, Pamela was able to generate funds for a community meal project and new sports equipment for her school. She also realized how effective flowers are in motivating volunteers, so she began making arrangements for adult volunteers in her community. "I recognized that flowers, unlike other gifts, could really have a brightening effect on people's lives," she said.

In light of numerous statistics indicating Americans today are less involved in their communities than they once were, it is vital that we encourage and support the kind of selfless contributions these young citizens have made. People of all ages need to think

more about how we, as individual citizens, can work together at the local level to ensure the health and vitality of our own communities. Young volunteers like Cheyne and Pamela are inspiring examples to all of us, and are among our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.

The program that brought these young volunteers to our attention—The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards—was created by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1995 to impress upon all youth volunteers that their contributions are critically important and highly valued, and to inspire other young people to follow their example. Over the past 14 years, the program has become the nation's largest youth recognition effort based solely on community service and has honored more than 80,000 young volunteers at the local, state and national level.

Mr. Valentine and Ms. Fawns should be extremely proud to have been singled out from the thousands of dedicated volunteers who participated in this year's program. I heartily applaud both of them for their initiative in seeking to make their communities better places to live. Their actions show that young Americans can—and do—play important roles in our communities.

HONORING JEANNETTE VARELA

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Jeannette Varela, a successful entrepreneur with a commitment to her community.

Born in Barranquilla, Colombia, Jeannette was the second of eight children. At the age of eighteen, Jeannette left her home country with just thirty dollars and a limited grasp of English. She came to the United States seeking a new life in the "land of opportunity." Jeannette found work in various jobs to make ends meet, eventually working in the heavy equipment industry in Miami, Florida.

She has a heart for helping others, has been recognized for her philanthropic endeavors and is a respected community leader.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I ask you to join me in honoring Jeannette Varela.

HOMELESS VETERANS RE-INTEGRATION PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 30, 2009

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1171, "Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009." I want to thank my colleague Congressman JOHN BOOZMAN of Arkansas for introducing this legislation.

I firmly believe that we should celebrate our veterans after every conflict, and I remain committed, as a Member of Congress, to both